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ABSTRACT

A large body of literature was reviewed to examine the concept of community education. The review was based on the sociological concept of power as it pertains to education--how power enters into educational institutions through formal decision-making procedures, methods of assessment, and views of knowledge. The study began with a schematic review of literature on the sociology of education to set the context for a discussion of the notion of community education. The study found that many researchers were concerned with the relationship of schooling to social inequality and suggested, explicitly or implicitly, ways of changing education toward a situation of greater equality. It also found that community education locates domination and power in the decision-making processes that affect curriculum and instruction. Curriculum and instruction, in turn, produce in the majority of working class pupils a sense of failure and incompetence. Advocates of community education thus view the school in ways that promote combining learning with social action. However, there are theoretical objections and practical problems with community education, such as parental attitudes, power, examinations, pupil resistance, and lack of resources. These problems may stem from limitations in the implicit theory of power used by advocates of community education. (An extensive, 302-item reference list is provided in this paper.) (KC)

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THE THEORY OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION A Social-Theoretical Critique

Phil Carspecken

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This paper critically examines the concept of community education. It does so by developing the sociological concept of power as it pertains to education: how power enters into our educational institutions through formal decision making procedures, methods of assessment, and views of knowledge. It begins with a fairly schematic review of literature on the sociology of education to set the context for a more lengthly discussion of the notion of community education.

I Schools and Inequality

The sociology of education expanded rapidly as an academic field in Britain just after World War Two at the same time that educational provision itself was rapidly extended. The introductory sections of a number of articles and books on educational sociology present the development of the discipline through the description of a number of theoretical orientations which have risen sequentially to prominence (eg. Karabel and Halsey 1977, Whitty 1985). Usually included are:

- 1) The political arithmetic approach of the 1950s and early 1960s (e.g. D.V. Glass, 1954; Floud, Halsey and Martin 1957, see also Halsey, Heath and Ridge 1980).
- 2) Theories of cultural deprivation produced during the latter 1960s (see Boyd 1977 and Keddie 1971b for reviews).
- 3) The 'new' sociology of education of the very late 1960s and early 1970s (e.g. Brown, 1973, M.F.D. Young 1971a).
- 4) Theories of social and economic reproduction (e.g. Bowles and Gintis 1976, Dale 1977).
- 5) Cultural reproduction and education (e.g. Willis 1975, 1977, 1983, Mcrobbie 1978, Everhart 1983).
- 6) And what could be called 'post reproduction' theories (e.g. Wexler 1982, Apple 1979, 1982 introduction, 1983; Giroux 1981, 1983; Connell, Ashenden, Kesslerl, and Dowsestt 1982).

The main concern of each approach is with the relationship of schooling to social inequality. Most of these theoretical orientations suggest, explicitly or implicitly, a way of changing education towards a situation of greater equality. Comprehensive schools, for example, were adopted as educational policy in the 1960s with theoretical support from the early political arithmetic school, compensatory education programmes corresponded to the cultural deprivation thesis, community education schemes were concerned with problems identified in works of the 'new' sociology of education, and some form of 'socialism' is implicitly advocated in the work of the social and cultural reproduction theorists (Whitty 1985).



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These theoretical approaches may be distinguished from each other in a number of ways. Below, brief descriptions of each approach are provided. The different schools are contrasted with each other by examining their assumptions about power and knowledge and the different objects of study they each take. In some of the short summaries below references are omitted. The reader may refer to the list of approaches just above to find relevant works cited.

A) Political Arithmetic

Political arithmetic was (and where still practised, is) concerned with questions of access and types of schools. It viewed the school as a site where all children can gain knowledge an equal standard. Developing in the 1950s when secondary schooling was tripartite, it was interested in relating class backgrounds to types of schools attended and final occupational outcomes. inequality was above all inequality of access to equal schools. Different schools teach different types of knowledge providing different occupational opportunities. Knowledge itself is viewed as something essentially neutral, not entering as such into social relationships of inequality. The problem of inequality was a problem of fair access to knowledge, not a problem concerning forms of knowledge and teaching practices. The major questions to be answered by sociological analysis were therefore questions over which pupils entered which schools to learn what sorts of knowledge. The effects of political arithmetic on educational policy were its contribution towards the expansion of education and the movement towards the comprehensivisation of 11+ provision. Educational power was seen to be located ultimately in political and bureaucratic institutions determining educational provision. The focus of analysis was on mobility routes - what occurred inside schools was not taken as the main object of study.

B) Cultural Deprivation

Theories of cultural deprivation were early attempts to explain the failure of the comprehensive programme to alter the mobility routes of pupils. Working class pupils were still getting working class jobs in the mid-1960s and cultural deprivation theories located the explanatory variable was the culture of the home. School knowledge was still seen as a neutral possession which was transmitted to pupils, but now through a cultural medium. Culture was seen to include a set of values which either facilitated or obstructed constructive work habits, as a set of linguistic practices which either aided or hindered knowledge acquisition, and as a set of self images which influenced aspirations. Power was still located in the bureaucracies of the state but the focus of analysis had shifted from access to



schools to the effects of culture on educability. In terms of policy, cultural deprivation theories led to various forms of compensatory education.

C) Community Education

Advocates of community education such as Midwinter (1972, 1973, 1975), Halsey (1972) and Hargreaves (1982), make use of a somewhat different view of school knowledge than that implicit in cultural deprivation theory (as well as political arithmetic). Knowledge, from the community education perspective, is seen as information and skills which has its value in terms of its relevance to the lives of those acquiring it. As different social groups have different needs, the type of knowledge taught in schools ought to be different as well. Where the type of knowledge is identical (e.g. numerical skills), the form in which these skills are taught ought to differ, out to make full use of the culture and concerns of the communities which particular schools serve. Knowledge is thus not seen us a neutral acquisition, valuable in itself, but as something which out to be useful, where relevant use is determined by local conditions and needs.

Like cultural deprivation theories, community education programmes view the disparity between the middle class culture present in most schools and the cultures in which working class and ethnically diverse pupils live as the major explanatory variable for the perpetuation of inequality through schooling. But instead of recommending a course of compensatory training to bring middle class culture to the pupils of the working class, it recommends conducting education itself in the cultures of the communities surrounding the school. Doing so entails another difference from the perspectives considered so far: advocates of community education have often called for the devolution of educational decision making power to parents and residents served by schools. The argument is that for community education to work communities must somehow gain more power over the curriculum and pedagogic practices of their schools. Community education schemes have also generally attempted to alter the traditional power relationship between teachers and pupils, to allow local cultures to be expressed through the increased participation of pupils in the planning and organising of their educational activities. All aspects of community education theory, and the results of a number of attempts to implement it, are discussed in more detail in the next section.

D) The 'New' Sociology of Education

The 'new' sociology of education was concerned primarily with what is called 'the hidden curriculum': "...those unstated norms, values, and beliefs embedded in and



transmitted to students through the underlying rules that structure the routines and social relationships in school and classroom life" (Giroux, 1983 p 47). This has also been a key concern of community education (Hargreaves 1982), and in fact there are many overlaps in these two perspectives. One could argue that community education has been a practical attempt to solve the problems theorised by the 'new' sociology of education, although the prominent authors and practicioners of both groups are distinct. One of the better known advocates of the new sociology of education specified three areas of study for sociologists of education:

- the mental categories of educators
- classroom interaction
- educational knowledge

Gorbutt, cited in Whitty, (1977)

Community education has recognised problems in each of these areas and has suggested alterations in teacher-pupil and school-community power relationships as the solution. But the concepts of power and domination receive greater theoretical elaboration in the 'new' sociology of education. Theorists in this school see power exercised through the imposition of norms, values, and general orientations to reality (e.g. passive and accepting as opposed to active and transforming) upon pupils. These norms and values exist implictly in the selection and organisation of knowledge, the patterns of interaction within the classroom, and the form and content of curricular texts. The 'new' sociology of education thus conceived of power relations mediated through schooling practice in terms of the pupil subjectivities which it shapes. Knowledge is therefore not just regarded with respect to its usefulness or its cultural form (which influences educability). Knowledge is ideological and schooling acts to maintain power relations in society not only through the consistent failure of subordinate groups to compete well on its terms but through its transference of ideological orientations to those pupils who do succeed on its terms.

The 'new' sociology of education produced a variety of studies which claimed to have found ideological effects accompanying the organisation of knowledge and schoolroom practice in a number of ways (see Whitty 1977; Whitty and Young 1976). Two very basic themes which have been consistently present in these studies can be noted in particular. One is the reification and commodification of knowledge (see Whitty 1977). School knowledge is reified because it disguises its social origins. As Young points out (1971b), school knowledge is always the result of certain selections from a large number of possible knowledges. It is organised in specific ways and arranged in a status hierarchy which has social origins rather than any



intrinsic origins in knowledge itself. Knowledge is a social product which can and does alter over time. But knowledge isn't presented in this way in the classroom. Instead it's usual mode of presentation is that of something fixed and neutral which can be unproblematically transmitted by teachers and possessed by pupils. Its appearance in this form produces a passive and unquestioning attitude on the part of-pupils and gives them an orientation towards knowledge which precludes their own possible contribution to its production. Moreover, the division and organisation of knowledge into a status hierarchy helps to select-pupils for the occupational hierarchy. Academic knowledge is first made separable from the sorts of knowledges involved in manual skills and then given a higher status than the latter. The 'new' sociology of education points out that this corresponds to the separation of mental and manual labour in society - it is an organisation of knowledge with social, not intrinsic origins (Young 1971b). School knowledge is a form of ideology.

For changing society, the 'new' sociology of education advocated altering the consciousness of educators, making the hidden curriculum explicit and therefore alterable (see Whitty 1985 for excellent summary). This belief could actually be argued to represent an inconsistency in the theoretical assumptions most commonly accompanying work in the 'new' sociology of education tradition, because it tends to ascribe a great deal of autonomy to the consciousness of teachers, and their realms of possible activity, while viewing pupils as passive recipients of the hidden messages of schooling. Teachers, in other words, are seen as agents capable of dramatically changing their practice with a change in consciousness while pupils are seen as doomed to play out the roles, values and identities imbibed through processes of socialisation. Even if the 'new' sociology of education were to defend itself by arguing that in the case of both teachers and pupils, awareness is the key variable in whether or not one is subject to ideology, the approach ignores the question of the origins of ideology. While schools were viewed as sites in which the consciousness of pupils was strongly shaped, there was little or no connection theorised between the forms of this consciousness and the economic and political structures of society. Correspondences between the two were noted, but the way in which these correspondences form wasn't explained. Both of these shortcomings in the 'new' sociology of education, its failure to examine the active appropriation, alteration, and rejection of the hidden curriculum by pupils and its lack of a theory which connects ideological effects associated with the organisation of knowledge to broader societal structures, were addressed within subsequent theoretical trends.



E) Social Reproduction

Social reproduction theories of aducation were attempts to link social structure to education through a marxist framework. Schooling in Capitalist America by Bowles and Gintis (1976) is amongst the best known works of this type. It argues that the inequalities of class relations in capitalist society are reproduced in schools through a direct correspondence between teacher-pupil authority relations and employer-worker relations. The correspondences described in the book are argued to be determined by the economic structure of capitalist society. Bowles and Gintis were important in the recent history of the sociology of education for drawing attention to the relation between social structure and schoolroom practice. Their argument was that direct relationships between the formation of pupil subjectivities in schools and economic relations in society exist.

Correspondence theory gives power a functionalist location in social structure. School practices have the correspondences they do, and produce the results they do, because capitalist society 'needs' them to. The organisation of incoviedge is given second place to assessment and forms of authority relationships as the principle features of schooling which influence pupil subjectivity. The focus of analysis is upon similarities between school social relationships and workplace social relationships.

The shortcomings of Schooling in Capitalist America are widely recognised, and are acknowledged by Bowles and Gintis themselves (Gintis and Bowles 1981, see also Karabel and Halsey 1977, introduction). In particular, correspondence has been shown to be a much too simplistic model of the relationship between the school and the economy. Where direct correspondences do exist, explanations must be provided of them without recourse to functionalism, and there are many instances where such correspondences do not exist. The mediating role of policy in the relationship between school practice and economic relationships is ignored in Schooling in Capitalist America, as is the extent to which autonomous action on the part of both pupils and teachers can alter, resist, or contribute to such correspondences. Pupils in particular are once again seen as much more passive and receptive of the messages of the hidden curriculum than is actually the case.

F) Cultural Reproduction

Cultural reproduction theories continued the interest in relations between capitalist social structure and processes of schooling-but introduced cultural production as the mediating link between the two. Willis's book Learning to Labour



known of a number of studies which examine the production of resistance cultures in schools for the role they play in reproducing social relations (McRobbie 1978, Everhart 1983). During the 1960s, Lacey (1970) and Hargreaves (1967) both studied the formation of resistance cultures in schools from a symbolic interactionist framework, but the cultural studies perspective pointed out relationships between the formation of such subcultures to cultures in other locations of society.

Cultural reproduction has been criticised as a paradigm for its implicit use of a reified view of social structure (Wexler 1982). Although the approach explicitly concerns itself with the agency of pupils and their rejection and transformation of the ideologies associated with classroom practice and school knowledge, it pits agency against a pre-given social order which makes the latter appear ultimately unchangeable in the end. Its critics have pointed out that like correspondence theory, reproduction locates power ultimately in a reification of what is actually on-going human activity (Apple 1982, introduction). Willis himself (1981) has argued that these criticisms apply more to interpretations of his work rather than what his study actually illustrated and claimed. His point is that systems of action on different social sites which reinforce each other operate through agency, through cultural forms of knowledge, and thus offers a way of not reifying the concept of social structure.

G) Post Reproduction Theories

During the 1980s sociological work on education has continued to be published from a number of different perspectives but the concerns of this thesis draw us particularly to a community of sociologists who share a broad view termed 'post-reproduction' here. Many in this group have themselves journeyed through the 'new' sociology of education and then versions of marxist analysis (primarily versions of reproduction theory) to come to either focus on highly specific empirical studies of one or two aspects of education (e.g. Anyon 1979, 1981), or on clarifying a number of theoretical concepts which had been previously employed in too monolithic or vague a manner. These concepts include 'culture', 'ideology', 'power', 'resistance', and 'structure' (e.g. Apple, 1983; Giroux 1983).

Hence post-reproduction work has been more concerned with complexity than with over-all parezigns. There has been an effort to combine insights gained by the 'new' sociology of education with those produced in work on reproduction. Some of the theoretical work of cultural studies has influenced the work of many authors in



this group, problematising the concepts of agency, culture, and structure and their inter-relations. Michael Appie, for example, writes of the need to develop:

a particularly sensitive perspective; a combination of what might be called a socio-economic approach to catch the structural phenomena and what might be called a cultural program of analysis to catch the level of everydayness.

Apple (1982), p 94

Apple explicitly recognises the importance of the debates between structural and cultural marxism (se "Social Theory and Social Movements II", Carspecken) and applies some of the distinctions made in cultural struies (Johnson 1979b) to education. Thus, for example, Apple distinguishes between aspects of culture in a way similar to Johnson: culture as lived experience in and through which pupils accept, resist, an/or transform the ideologies of school practice and ('common sense'), culture as a commodity for the labour market in Bourdieu's sense of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977), and culture as articulated theory or ideology (Apple 1982, p 18).

Giroux (1983) similarly, (though his analysis differs significantly from that of Apple and other authors we've included in this group) concerns himself with the complexity of situating schools in society: one must look at the many ways in which power and domination become expressed and maintained in the school: from processes of transmission in which 'the official language (of the school), school rules, classroom social relations, the selection and presentation of school knowledge, [and] the exclusion of specific cultural capital' serve to construct pupil subjectivities in ways reflecting dominant patterns of social inequality, to the use of blatant coercion in order to maintain control (see also Sharpe and Green 1975; Anyon 1981). Ideology, Giroux argues, must be analysed in its practical and theoretical forms, and in the complex ways it becomes articulated in specific locations through the media of historical traditions and cultural norms (Giroux 1983, p 372).

The drift of this work seems to be towards something akin to the actiontheoretical and cultural studies approaches I have reviewed in an earlier publication
with respect to social movements (Carspecken: "Social Movements and Social Theory
II). It has already been noted, for example, that convergences are evident with
Willis's use of a cultural studies perspective to analyse systems of action between
the school and other social sites that are mediated by cultural production and
Girlens' concept of social system. In Learning to Labour (Willis 1977) the type of
system relationship described is a barely monitored one, in which the
knowledgeability of the 'lads' works in only partial ways which are not cognisant of
the reproductive loop between school, shopfloor and home/community culture which the



resistance culture they produce contributes to. Apple's study of the production of school textbooks according to the logic of commodity production (1984), on the other hand, is an example of a more monitored system relationship - monitored through a structural set (to use Giddens' term) which allows for the convertibility of certain types of knowledge production into marketable goods. Studies of educational policy formation (Salter and Tapper 1981) involve a more highly monitored system relationship. Other studies, like those of Buswell (1980), Brown (1981) and Anyon (1978, 1979) on structures of meaning in school texts are essentially examinations of what could be called 'congealed' cultural products in a cultural studies perspective (Johnson 1983), and relatable to the 'paradigmatic dimension' of social structure distinguished by Anthony Giddens (1979). Hence it would be possible to incorporate much of the work of post-reproduction sociology of education into the action-theoretical and cultural studies perspectives outlined in chapter four.

INEQUALITY AS:	VARIABLES TO CHANGE	OUTCOMES
biased access (political arithmetic)	type of school. number of schools	career, knowledge
cultural form in which knowledge is taught (cultural deprivation)	amount and type of schooling given to different pupils	career, knowledge acquired
hidden curriculum i.e.: selection of knowledge, organisation of knowledge and pedagogic practice ('new sociology' & community education)	the mental categories of teachers and their professional milieu	pupil subjectivity and pupil assessment
hidden curriculum (correspondence)	social structure	pupil subjectivities
hidden curriculum and systematic linkages between forms of cultural production and social relations on various social situs (cultural reproduction)	to a certain extent the awareness of pupils, the resources they have with which to construct culture	pupil culture - jobs and job culture.



To summarise this section, the review of approaches provided above is useful for the attention it draws to possible roles which schools play in mediating and reproducing relations of domination in society. This review has drawn our attention to a number of different ways in which inequality and schooling have been viewed and theoretically related. Some approaches have considered inequality primarily in terms of mobility chances, others have viewed it in terms of class relations and their partial legitimation through the subjectivities which schooling shapes, still others have viewed the school as a site of cultural production which exists in systematic relationships with other social sites such as the workplace. Table 1 summarises the discussion, listing different understandings of inequality taken by the different approaches, noting which outcomes of schooling they take as their objects of interest and which aspects of schooling they have presented as necessary to alter in order to change these outcomes. Because of the diversity and complexity of the work I've grouped together as the 'post-reproduction' approach, this body of work cannot be included in the chart.

II Community Education

In the brief description of community education given above, I emphasised that this approach locates domination and power in the decision making processes which effect curriculum and pedagogy. Curriculum and pedagogy, in turn, effect subjective dispositions developed in pupils during their years of schooling, producing in the majority of working class pupils a sense of 'failure, incompetence, and impotence' (Halsey 1972, p 11). Advocates of community education thus view the school in ways highly similar to many theorists of the 'new' sociology of education because both are concerned with the experience of schooling as effected by curricular content and classroom relations. But the hopes of community education theorists have not rested so much with a change of consciousness in teachers which sociological publications may bring about but rather on the devolution of decision making power towards the school and community levels. The predicted results have been a change of pedagogic and curricular practice in the direction of socially relevant activity, combining learning with social action (Halsey 1972).

The idea of community education goes back at least as far as Henry Morris (see Fletcher 1980). Henry Morris, director of education in Cambridgeshire in the post First World War period, was faced with problems of rural school depopulations. His solution was formulated along three basic principles: bring village residents of all ages into the school buildings, make aspects of the community itself educational,



and share facilities with other community organisations. The results were largely successful and the idea soon spread to Leicestershire and Cumberland.

Community education first began to be thought of as a possible solution to urban problems during the 1960s when it began to be clear that comprehensive schools alone failed to eliminate class based differences in achievement. After the Newsom Report on non-grammar school pupils entitled Half Our Future (1963), attempts were made in many schools to develop 'community curricula' for pupils in the slower, non-examination streams of comprehensive schools. But these programmes were latter dropped as being inadequate. They carried a stigma within schools which still operated under an examination ethos, and 'Newsom pupils' failed to show the anticipated motivation, partially in consequence (Boyd 1977). This period of the 1960s was also the time when compensatory education, based on the cultural deprivation thesis, was tried out in policy.

Between 1968 and 1971 the Educational Priority Area (EPA) projects, run under the direction of A.H. Halsey, were carried out as efforts at finding ways of raising the educational performance of children in inner city districts of four British cities through increasing parental involvement, community awareness and responsibility, and improving teacher morale (Halsey 1972). They were consciously planned as alternatives to the compensatory approach, rejecting the goal of bringing middle class culture to the working class in favour of altering middle class curriculum and school authority relationships to meet working class needs. The Liverpool project, directed by Eric Midwinter, went the furthest in designing an alternative curriculum to achieve these ends. Midwinter saw the object of his innovations to lie in aiding those living in disadvantaged areas to learn traditional skills more readily, gain a sense of dignity through the emphasis put on the immediate environment, and greatly increase parental involvement (Midwinter 1972). He envisioned community education as a way of aiding those confined to deprived urban areas to change their environment, thus linking the idea of community education with community action.

During the 1970s a number of secondary schools attempted to extend the ideals of comprehensive education to include forms of community schooling. In their survey of a variety of such schools, Hatch and Moyland (1972) found the attempt to blur community-school distinctions to be the essence of the community schooling principle, and they specified two approaches to it: a 'moderate' approach and a 'radical' one. In the moderate approach, comprehensive schools simply make their



facilities available to the community and offer adult education courses. They may offer classes which adults and pupils attend together. The radical approach aims at introducing a 'community curriculum' for all pupils. Learning activities which entail the sorts of suggestions made by Midwinter (and Hargreaves in recent times, hargreaves 1982), and which aim at maximising the presence of the community in the school are key aspects of the radical version. At the same time, the radical version advocates putting schools under community control. Williams and Robins (1980) make a similar distinction to that made by Hatch and Moyland in their study of California community schools by aligning the schools they studied along a 'community education continuum' having 'programme-oriented' activities on one end and 'process-oriented' activities at the other. The process-oriented end of the pole includes aims of community action, grass roots democracy and self-actualisation, implying a combination of progressive pedagogy with local power similar to Hatch and Moyland's radical approach.

It is clear through the examination of Halsey's and Midwinter's writings that the concept of community education developed through the EPA 'action experiments' was of the radical, not the moderate, variety. Curricular innovations and the devolution of power were both key features in their recommendations. So were the combination of learning with grass roots democracy and social change. It is this sense of community education, the 'radical' or 'process' sense, that will be considered in the rest of this discussion.

The generally shared goals of many (radical) community education projects can be summarised in the following points:

1) To change the educational experience of lower class pupils in a way which will prepare them for life in deprived conditions:

what we intend is the opposite of a soporific: it is not to fit children for their station in life in an ascriptive sense. It is to accept that many children must lives out their lives in deprived areas and to inspire them to think boldly about it rather than lapse into resigned apathy. (Halsey 1972, quoted in Hargreaves, D. 1982, p 120)

2) To change the curriculum of inner-city schools with the above goal in mind:

the primary duty of the school would be so to familiarise its pupils with their type of community and its likely future that, as citizens, they would be better equipped to cope with the social issues presented to them. In brief, the community school must have a community curriculum. (Midwinter 1973, p 67).

Thus the curriculum would incorporate aspects of local community life, including projects aimed at changing the environment. Midwinter's recommendations suggest a curriculum that stress skills rather information,



social rather than academic content, and make wide use of art, craft and drama (ibid). As Poster (1982, p 3) emphasises, the curriculum must put process over product, stressing pupil participation and interpersonal relations.

3) To devolve educational decision making power away from both state administrative bodies and educational professionals to adults in the community. As Poster writes:

The prime distinction has to be made from the outset: are community education programmes devised for people or with people. (Poster 1982, p 122)

As the 1970s proceeded, results of long-term efforts to apply community education ideals in various comprehensives became available for study and for the re-evaluation of the policy. Bob Moon (1983), in a summary of six accounts of such efforts, concludes that a problem common to nearly all such attempts lay between the 'progressive ideas' of the educationalists and the 'conservative' attitudes of parents (p 133):

This discrepancy between the ambitions of those in the schools and the unfamiliarity of the community, represents a central dilemma in the reforts to reform comprehensive education. How is it possible to reconcile a commitment to changing what, for many young people, is clearly an unsatisfying experience with an equal commitment to acknowledging the significance and importance of community opinion on the directions the school should take?

Other writers have agreed that the objectives of community education for changing the content and style of teaching ironically runs into serious obstacles from adults in the community. Bernstein, in 'Pedagogies: Visible and Invisible' (1977) argues that the progression of roles based on age and gender in working class communities are in opposition to age and gender roles accompanying progressive education, and thus predicts that parental understanding of the pedagogical objectives of progressive 3chools is nearly impossible in the case of the working class. David Hargreaves (1982) believes for similar reasons that one of the key components of the radical version of community education, the devolution of power to parents, may have to be dropped:

at the present time it is very unlikely that parents would be strongly in favour of a community centred curriculum in a comprehensive school; it is much more likely that they would show a strong preference for the traditional curriculum... A community centred curriculum is much more likely to be developed in a school where the head teacher and staff are committed to the notion but are highly insulated from relatively powerless and non-participating parents. (1982, p 124)

Yet insulation can lead to disastrous consequences as the case of William Tyndale Primary School (where enraged parents helped to close down a school which employed 'progressive' methods without any prior communication or consultation with them -



see Dale 1979) and Rising Hill Comprehensive (see Berg 1968) show. More importantly, removing the components of participation and grass roots power from the notion of community education greatly weakens it. Many would argue that genuine community education is not possible without such participation — it is the only way that curriculum and teacher—pupil relationships can meaningfully correspond to, rather than conflict with, the culture of the locality. Without such a correspondence, 'progressive' teaching methods remain alien importations which continue to provide an unequal educational experience through the hidden curriculum (Bernstein, 1977).

Thus it is not surprising that actual efforts at creating community schools have tended to involve changes in curriculum and school social relationships with only slight involvement of adults from the neighbourhood (Moon 1983). And this means that projects calling themselves 'community education' have actually been versions of progressivism, conceived and implemented solely by educationalists. Power, in other words, has not devolved. Recalling Lukes' (1974) three dimensional theory of power, we can see that community education is concerned with the level of decision making and doesn't really come to grips with the 'third dimension' of power in which cultural attitudes contribute to patterns of domination. It is impossible to advocate the devolution of educational power to parents without taking into account cultural factors which will influence their perceptions and choices. If these cultural factors are hegemonic, i.e., if they exist at tacit levels of awareness and are in reinforcing relationships with broad patterns of social inequality, simply devolving educational decision making power may not have desirable effects on curriculum and pedagogy. But on the other hand, devolving power may alter, over time, the attitudes of parents by enabling them to alter their common sense assumptions about schooling through their actual participation in it (see Carspecken 1985 for an empirical study of the effects of parental involvement in schools).

Boyd (1977) criticises community education through an analysis of power, though not by reference to cultural attitudes but rather by questioning the very possibility of devolving decision making power itself. He points out that the goal of community education is to unify actual 'community action' with learning. Power thus isn't simply a question of decisions over the form and content of schooling but also over the ability to mobilise resources to change conditions in the locality:

Involvement of those living in the neighbourhood so that they cease to perceive themselves as recipients, and see themselves as agents bringing about change would seem to be a necessary condition...Yet, paradoxically, it would seem that people in the inner city are powerless to bring about change of and by themselves. Much therefore



seems to depend on the growth of neighbourhood and community awareness as a facilitator of change. (1977, pp 16-17)

boyd cites Halsey and Midwin'er themselves (1972, 1972) for evidence of the powerlessness typifying inner city areas. But he draws a different conclusion from it than they do. The radical version of community education implies the devolution of more than just educational power - it must involve the devolution of the command of a score of resources which are in the hands of the local government. He puts his finger on the point made repeatedly by Habermas (1976) and Offe (1975a, 1975b) that welfare capitalism has put citizens in the client role rather than in the participant role. Community education could challenge the citizen-state relationship of welfare capitalism generally, not just in the particular case of schooling. Thus:

it seems to us that educational provision alone cannot solve even the problems of educational poverty, if only because in this sphere there are no purely educational problems. (Coates and Silburn 1970, p 73; cited in Boyd 1977, p 10).

In fact, Midwinter and Halsey both formulated their theories of community education within a basically pluralist framework. Their assumption was that institutional channels must be created for working class adults to gain access to decision making power. Their suggestions place little emphasis on linkages between educational decision making and other forms of decision making, i.e., structural or systematic relations between domination existing on a number of separate sites in society. Midwinter's comments on the state reveal his pluralist assumptions: he seems to attribute conflict between citizens and the state solely to attitudes:

There should not be this feeling that school is a part of the establishment, a sector of the 'them' ranged over against 'us'. There should not be this depressing gap between what is the state's and what is the individual's. The state versus the individual is a sad phrase. The state is a conglomeration of individuals and an association of communities. (1973, p 79)

But, 'sad' though the phrase may be, the state versus the individual is a fact of modern capitalism. Merson and Campbell (1974) argue that the asymmetrical distribution of power in modern urban complexes is a fact which virtually makes the goals of community education an impossibility:

Crucially, in the context of the present discussion, decisions about the provision of housing, education and employment reside in an economic elite who exist physically outside the area, and access to this elite, and therefore to the decision-making processes, is not in the gift of the inhabitants of the oppressed area. (p 44)

Their conclusion is that community education is not possible aside from a general programme of altering power relationships.



Another objection to community education has been the argument that it seeks to create a different type of education for working class children which would undoubtedly be regarded as 'second class' in society as a whole and which would thus simply exacerbate the disadvantages facing the working class on the job market. Halsey (1972) himself was not unaware of the problem, but argued that traditional curricula in comprehensive schools would enable only a small minority of the working class to move upwards in society. Since the bulk of working class children have to face futures within deprived communities, a different type of education, geared to making empowered adults capable of changing their environment, seem justified to Midwinter. He emphasises that the goals of a community curriculum include the improvement of the transmission of traditional skills and thus the possibility of actually increasing mobility at the same time that it empowers groups for making changes in their social environment (1972, p 29). In other words, mobility need not be ruled out in a community school for those few pupils who would be mobile through more traditional schools.

But a more realistic recognition of this problem by an advocate of community education can be found in the work of David Hargreaves (1982), who argues that until so indeed national examinations are eliminated, there is little chance of developing genuine community curricula which is not regarded as inferior in comparison to the traditional curriculum. Examinations, he argues, are the strongest tie between education and the job market, and as long as this tie exists examination results will continue to be the highest priority in teachers' and parents' minds. His recommended solution is to abolish the examination system, make community studies and expressive arts compulsors in all secondary schools, and thereby free educators to introduce forms of curriculum and pedagogy which correspond to the real experiences of pupils in their local communities (1982, p. 128).

In fact it would seem that any interpretation of the radical version of community education would lead logically to the decision to abolish or greatly modify the examination system, and not just for the reasons put forth by Hargranes. On the level of the relationship between education and the state, examinations further tie all provided education to the logic of the job market. The usefulness of knowledge under an examination system becomes above all its translation into a certificate which can be used to get jobs. Any other attempt to introduce usefulness into knowledge becomes only secondary. In fact, examinations contribute to a general ideology of the purpose of education as solely being employability (CCCS 1981). Of course, standard examinations were initially viewed as a great



opportunity for subordinate classes because they have opened up avenues of mobility. But the work of the political arithmetic school has shown beyond a doubt that even after 35 years of standard examinations, lower class children on the whole can still expect a future of only lower class jobs or unemployment (Halsey et al 1980) while examinations make this situation appear legitimate (Broadfoot 1979, p 40, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). The privilege brought by the standard examination system to people of all classes to compete nationwide is a modern form of the paradoxical winning of state provided education by the working class during the 19th century:

Far indeed from promising liberation, provided education threatened subjection. It seemed at best a laughable and irrelevant divergence (useless knowledge in fact); or at worst a species of tyranny. (Johnson, 1979a p 78).

And examinations appear tyrannical in other ways as well. If the goal of community education is to teach participation and to empower purils with respect to their environments, then the whole presentation of knowledge ought to be one in which knowledge is seen by the pupils to be a social product to which they can contribute and about which they can raise criticisms. Examinations contribute enormously to what Whitty and Young (1976) call 'commodity knowledge', i.e., objective knowledge possessed by one (the teacher) and not by another (the pupil or parent) and which can be neutrally transmitted from the former to the latter. Commodity knowledge is a reification of an essentially fallible social product with necessary ideological effects (Whitty 1977, Young and Whitty 1977, Wexler 1982, Giroux 1983). Examinations play a large role in this process of reification by making knowledge measurable and 'thing-like', which one either has or doesn't have. As one of the early representatives of the 'new' sociology of aducation writes:

[teachers] remain imprisoned in the service of a reality from which creation and transformation have been removed. ... The pupil's relations to knowledge becomes that of reproducing the known, the teacher's that of evaluating the quality of that reproduction according to certain standards.

Hextall, quoted in Whitty, 1977 p 65

Examinations are thus another aspect of the 'third dimension of power'. They serve both to impose a passive attitude on the part of pupils and parents towards the knowledge produced by members of a specific stratum of society (Apple 1984), to lead members of subordinate groups to doubt their own production of knowledge in day to day life, and to form the basis of teacher authority over pupils and parents.

Pupil resistance has been yet another problem with experiments in community education. Reports from Neil Thompson on the Abraham Moss Centre, from Bob Evans



on Countesthorpe College, Mervyn Flecknoe on the Sutton Centre, and Bob Moon on Stantonbury Campus (all in Moon 1983) all refer to initial periods of pupil disruption in their experimental schools. As Moon explains in the representative case of his own school, pupils came to the new institution with already deeply ingrained attitudes: 'Ideas about school and what school stood for had been established both by personal experience elsewhere as well as by the expectations of family, friends and the world at large' (1983, p 68). And these 'ideas' included patterns of resisting school authority which were capable of even greater expression in the 'pupil-centred' atmospheres of these schools. Yet all the contributors to Moon's book argued that pupil disruption decreased over time (two to three years) and that they expected the problem to continue to decrease as yet more time goes by (sees Moon's summary, p 148). It will be seen that pupil resistance was a major feature of the Croxteth occupation which had an effect on the development of school organisation and authority relationships.

Lastly, another problem which has faced practitioners of community education has been the lack of practical ideas and appropriate materials available. Neil Thompson (1983, p 38), for example, reports that at the Abraham Moss Centre in Manchester, an alternative curriculum was first attempted but later dropped because no materials and already thought-out programmes existed which teachers could draw upon. Teachers tried to make their own materials at first and to plan projects, but found that the time demands on teaching alone left them little surplus for additional activities:

If the ground had been better understood; if the ideas had been previously rehearsed, there would have been fewer difficulties. (p 39)

And this problem proved insurmountable even though the staff at the Abraham Moss Centre had been carefully selected for their enthusiasm. This problem of a lack of formulated alternatives is, of course, lessened by the pioneering efforts of schools like Countesthorpe, the Sutton Centre, and the Abraham Moss Centre themselves. But it is rooted in a more general problem: the lack of what can be called a 'counterhegemony' in educational ideology and practice. As Broadfoot (1979) points out, traditional educational practice and ideology is so deeply embedded within a narrow framework of assumptions held by policy makers, teachers and parents alike, that even when clear alternatives are formulated in theory they aren't taken very seriously.

To summarise, theoretical objections and practical problems found with community education fall into five areas:



- Parental attitudes which originate in local cultures and which, we've argued, may exist in reinforcing relationships to society-wide patterns of domination.
- 2) Power which cannot be reduced to one of simply creating more institutional avenues for parental access to decision making processes concerning education plone.
- 3) Examinations which reinforce a reified view of knowledge, back up traditional forms of teacher authority, reinforce the 'common sensical' view that the main purpose of education is employability (and thus tightly tie the logic of schooling to the commodification process see Offe, 1974, 1985).
- 4) Pupil resistance which has deep cultural roots and a relationship to the structural location of schools (Willis 1977, McRobbie 1978, Everhart 1983, Apple 1983, Giroux 1983).
- 5) Lack of available alternatives to traditional educational practice upon which teachers (and parents) can draw. In Gramsci's terms, this could be phrased as the lack of a counter-hegemony with respect to educational purposes and practices.

I suggested above that many of these problems stem from limitations in the implicit theory of power used by advocates of community education. The key hypothesis of community education theory, as we've seen from table 1, is that educational decision making power is an independent variable. The devolution of power to community adults is then proposed as a solution to the undesirable dependent variables focused upon in this approach: the imposition of a sense of failure, incompetence and impotence in pupils of the lower classes. But this is only a one-, or at best a two-, dimensional theory of power. Power relations are instantiated in ways other than access to decision making, through ideology and hegemony. In education, ideology and hegemony take forms within the attitudes held by people towards the purposes and 'proper' forms of schooling, through the reification of knowledge, and the examination system. For the features of schooling singled out by advocates of community education for change (table 1) to be altered, complex patterns of domination existing on many dimensions and sites would have to . be challenged. In terms of action theory, the participants in community education would have to gain an increased awareness of the conditions in which they act ' within the school. Moreover, in addition to gaining an awareness of hegemonic and ideological elements forming the conditions in which they think and act, they would have to have two other things: the means to construct alternative actions in theory and the power to implement these alternatives in practice. The five problems listed above suggest that a combination of all three of these needs; awareness, alternative perspectives and power, is unlikely to occur, especially if community education remains a state policy, that is, yet another service offered by the welfare state.



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Since the radical version of community education challenges the client-administrator relationship of the welfare state, it is certainly problematical to make community education an official policy. This doesn't mean that a state policy of community schooling is totally self-contradictory, but simply that such policies are difficult to achieve, there is a tension built into the situation between the form (a state policy) and the ideal content (an alteration of the client-administrator relationship). As Boyd many times stresses in his critique:

the idea of the community school did not come from the grass roots but has been developed by researchers concerned with the regeneration of inner-city neighbourhoods. (Boyd 1977, p 12)

And thus what usually results is a moderate rather than a radical version of the ideal.



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